

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 01531 041431Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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SUBJ: TITO VISIT TO PANAMA

REF: A PANAMA 1095, B BELGRADE 1361

SUMMARY: TITO VISIT WILL RECEIVE MAXIMUM GOP PUBLICITY EFFORT, WITH EMPHASIS ON COMMON STANCES OF NONALIGNMENT OF BOTH COUNTRIES. DOMESTICALLY, VISIT WILL BE HAILED AS SYMBOL OF THE SUCCESS OF PANAMA'S

FOREIGN POLICY. WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE IT WILL TAKE ON AN ANTI-AMERICAN TONE. ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE US LIES IN ITS ILLUSTRATION OF THE GOP'S DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT AND NONALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. ON FEB 20, CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL TORRIJOS ANNOUNCED DESIGNATION OF HIGH-LEVEL COMMISSION TO COORDINATE ALL ASPECTS OF PREVIOUSLY-ANNOUNCED (REF A) VISIT BY YUGOSLAV PRESIDENT MARSHAL TITO. THIS COMMISSION, WHICH HELD ITS FIRST MEETING FEB 23, IS CHAIRED BY VICE PRESIDENT GERARDO GONZALEZ, AND INCLUDES AMONG OTHERS PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, PRESIDENT OF SUPREME COURT, CHAIRMAN AND SEVERAL MEMBERS OF NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 01531 041431Z

COMMISSION AND NUMBER OF CABINET MINISTERS HEADED BY ACTING

FOREIGN MINISTER OZORES. OVERALL COORDINATOR FOR VISIT WILL BE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF NATIONAL GUARD GENERAL STAFF MAJ. ROBERTO DIAZ HERRERA. ALSO ANNOUNCED WAS FORMATION OF SEVERAL SUBCOMMITTEES DEALING WITH VARIOUS ASPECTS OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISIT.

2. MAJOR EFFORT TO PROMOTE PUBLIC INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN THIS VISIT HAS ALREADY BEGUN. PRESS COVERAGE IS HEAVY, WITH EXTENSIVE LAUDATORY BACKGROUND ARTICLES ON MARSHAL TITO, YUGOSLAV NATION, AND ITS RELATIONS WITH PANAMA. PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY GONZALEZ PITTY HAS BEGUN SERIES OF MEETINGS AND TOURS TO ENCOURAGE THE 505 REPRESENTATIVES TO MOBILIZE POPULAR SUPPORT. TRANSPORT WORKERS' CONFEDERATION (WHICH IS HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY GOP) HAS ANNOUNCED IT WILL MAKE BUS TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE TO ASSIST IN ASSEMBLING SPECTATORS FOR PUBLIC ACTIVITIES DURING VISIT.

3. NO SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES HAS YET BEEN ANNOUNCED, BUT MAKEUP OF PREPARATORY COMMITTEES MAKES IT CERTAIN THAT ONE FEATURE WILL BE TRIP TO ALMOST-COMPLETED BAYANO HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT WHICH YUGOSLAVIA HELPED CONSTRUCT. OTHER ACTIVITIES WILL INCLUDE VISITS TO OTHER NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, AND TO BANANA-PRODUCING AREAS OF COUNTRY (YUGOSLAVIA IS AMONG NONTRADITIONAL BANANA MARKETS BEING CULTIVATED BY PANAMA, AND THERE HAS BEEN FREQUENT REFERENCE TO SUPPORT FROM YUGOSLAVIA DURING "BANANA WAR" OVER EXPORT TAX IN 1974).

4. NONALIGNMENT HAS BEEN A PRINCIPAL THEME IN PRESS COVERAGE AND COMMENTARY ABOUT VISIT; COMMENTATORS HAVE OBSERVED THAT TITO IS SOLE SURVIVING FOUNDING FATHER OF NONALIGNED MOVEMENT, THAT PANAMA IS NOW NUMBERED AMONG NONALIGNED AND THAT OTHER NONALIGNED COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN AMONG PANAMA'S FIRM SUPPORTERS IN REGARD TO CANAL ISSUE, AND THAT PANAMA AND YUGOSLAVIA SHARE THE COMMON ASPIRATION OF INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT BY INDIVIDUALLY-APPROPRIATE MEANS, OUTSIDE OF BLOCS DOMINATED BY MAJOR POWERS.

5. COMMENT: IT IS EVIDENT THAT GOP IS PREPARING TO GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO MAKE OF THIS RETURN OF TORRIJOS' 1974 VISIT TO BELGRADE A MAJOR POPULAR EVENT. WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING OF NEW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 01531 041431Z

SUBSTANTIVE RESULTS EXPECTED FROM THIS VISIT, AND FRANKLY EXPECT NONE TO EMERGE. VISIT WILL BE PLAYED DOMESTICALLY AS SYMBOLIZING SUCCESS OF PANAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY. IT WILL SET CEREMONIAL CAPSTONE ON DEVELOPMENT OF PANAMANIAN-YUGOSLAV COOPERATION, AND THEREBY SYMBOLIZE PANAMA'S STATUS AS AN INDEPENDENT ACTOR ON THE WORLD SCENE. ASIDE FROM STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT ON THE TREATY ISSUE--WHICH PANAMA SEEKS AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY--WE DO NOT EXPECT THE VISIT TO TAKE ON AN OPENLY

AND SPECIFICALLY ANTI-AMERICAN TONE. FROM OUR STANDPOINT,
ITS SIGNIFICANCE LIES IN ITS ILLUSTRATION OF A PROCESS OF
DEVELOPMENT IN PANAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY, RATHER THAN IN THE
FACT OF THE VISIT ITSELF. END COMMENT.

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